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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 15 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 49/76 D, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean". By that resolution, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to report to its fiftieth session on the activities of the regional centres.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. THE PROBLEM OF FINANCING THE REGIONAL CENTRES

3. The United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (at Lomé), Latin America and the Caribbean (at Lima) and Asia and the Pacific (at Kathmandu) were established by resolutions of the General Assembly in 1986, 1987 and 1988 respectively. The centres function under the supervision of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, which acts as the focal point for coordinating inputs to their activities by other organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system.

4. There is a wide level of agreement that political and military developments in recent years have highlighted the importance of activities at the regional level to enhance the stability and security of Member States. Arms limitation and disarmament remain of primordial importance. Regional approaches to openness, transparency, confidence-building and disarmament can address security concerns in a number of regions of the world.

5. The regional centres, however, remain unable to function in the manner intended by the General Assembly because of inadequate financial resources. This is a result of a steady fall in voluntary contributions, in particular from Member States within the regions concerned.

6. The Secretary-General is therefore obliged to point out that unless Member States take early and effective action to reverse this trend, there will be no alternative to suspending even the reduced functions performed locally by the centres and closing their offices in the three capitals concerned. Thereafter, disarmament activities of a regional nature would be carried out only by staff members based in New York or Geneva.

7. The Secretary-General would regret the demise of the centres. He shares the view that the regional dimension to disarmament is an important one. He notes that some Member States have been ready, and remain ready, to make voluntary contributions to support substantive activities of the centres. But those substantive activities cannot be carried out unless Member States are also ready to finance the centres' administrative and operational requirements. The host Governments have been generous in this respect, but the support of other Governments is needed too.

8. The choice lies with Member States. The Secretary-General again appeals to them urgently to find an appropriate solution to this financial problem. If they do not succeed in doing so during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, he will see no alternative to closing the centres' offices at Lomé, Lima and Kathmandu.

III. FUNCTIONING OF THE CENTRES

Activities of the regional centres during the period from August 1994-July 1995

A. Regional Centre in Africa

1. Staffing and finance

9. Because of severe financial constraints, the post of Director, vacant since the previous incumbent's resignation in July 1992, has not been filled. The Centre has been operating with a skeleton local staff at the General Service level: one research assistant acting as officer-in-charge, one bilingual secretary, one messenger/cleaner, one watchman/cleaner and one driver.

10. Since the submission of the previous report (A/49/389), voluntary contributions in the amount of $30,537.42 have been pledged to the Centre, and a total of $59,624.26 had been received as of July 1995, a sum which included prior pledges for the years 1993 and 1994. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Algeria, Finland, France, Italy, Norway and Sweden for their contributions and to the Government of Togo for its support of the Centre.

2. Objectives and activities of the Centre

11. During the reporting period, the Centre's activities, due to financial constraints, have been further curtailed, focusing primarily on the dissemination of information relating to disarmament, peace and security relevant to the African region. The Centre resumed monthly informal meetings at its office for people interested in disarmament, peace and security, as well as development-related issues in Africa. It also made efforts to widen the distribution of its quarterly bilingual publication The African Peace Bulletin (Bulletin Africain de la Paix), which focuses on relevant developments in the field of peace, security and disarmament and related issues, mainly in the African continent. In order to increase and diversify the number of its acquisitions through exchange, the Centre's documentation and reference library has established cooperative links with several research and academic institutions.

12. On the occasion of the 1994 United Nations Day and the Disarmament Week, the Centre organized jointly with the United Nations Information Centre at Lomé an information tour to a number of towns in Togo, from 26 October to 7 November 1994. The objective of this activity, carried out in collaboration with the Togolese Federation of UNESCO Associations and Clubs, was to encourage

peace education among the population. Togo introduced teaching on the United Nations system into its school syllabus some years ago.

13. Staff members based in New York or in field missions in Africa fulfilled the Centre's continuing responsibility for providing substantive and organizational support to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The sixth Ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee was held from 20 to 24 March 1995 at Brazzaville.

14. Staff based in New York also provided substantive and secretarial support to the Secretary-General's Advisory Mission on the proliferation of light weapons in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion, which took place in Mali from 14 to 21 August 1994 and in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal from 22 February to 31 March 1995.

B. Regional Centre in Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Staffing and finance

15. Since the resignation of the Centre's last Director in August 1993, responsibility for the Centre has been assumed by the officer-in-charge, a local staff member at the General Service level. Because of the financial situation, no other local support staff have been recruited.

16. Since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/49/389), voluntary contributions in the amount of $13,833.33 have been pledged to the Centre, and a total of $53,261.37 had been received as of July 1995, which included prior pledges for the years 1993 and 1994. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Chile, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Spain, Sweden and Venezuela for their contributions and to the Government of Peru for its support of the Centre.

2. Objectives and activities of the Centre

17. Because of extreme financial constraints, the Centre's activities have been largely directed towards maintaining contacts and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations, research centres, academic institutions and other United Nations bodies and agencies interested in issues of disarmament and international security. The Centre's reference library continued to be used by students and researchers. The Centre has also regularly distributed its own and other United Nations publications throughout the region.

18. In the substantive field, the Centre provided assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Peru in the preparation and holding of an international conference on the Chemical Weapons Convention, which brought together at Lima, from 29 August to 2 September 1994, representatives from most States in the Latin America and Caribbean region, including non-signatory States. The Conference facilitated the exchange of views on how to increase understanding of the obligations involved in the national implementation of the Convention.

19. On 27 February 1995, the Centre hosted a round-table discussion led by a representative of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency of the United States of America, on the Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1995. The meeting was attended by Peruvian officials, nuclear experts, international security advisers, military officers, and university students.

20. In commemoration of United Nations Day and Disarmament Week, the officer-in-charge of the Centre participated in the events hosted by the Catholic University "Santa Maria" in the city of Arequipa, in southern Peru, on 24 and 25 October 1994.

C. Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific

1. Staffing and finance

21. Because of serious financial constraints, the Centre has still been unable to recruit any local support staff. For this reason, the Director continued to operate from Headquarters in New York, an arrangement which will have to remain in force until a reliable means can be found to finance the Centre's operational needs at Kathmandu. In the meantime, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Information Officers at Kathmandu have continued to provide the Centre with logistic support for the meeting held there each year (see para. 26 below).

22. Since the last report to the General Assembly (A/49/389), voluntary contributions in the amount of $38,432.01 have been pledged to the Centre, and a total of $72,546.36 had been received as of July 1995, which included prior pledges for the years 1993 and 1994. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of China, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Thailand as well as Rissho Kosei-Kai, a Japanese non-governmental organization, for their contributions, and to the Government of Nepal for its financial and overall support of the Centre.

2. Objectives and activities of the Centre

23. Despite limited financial resources, the Centre was able to organize three major regional meetings at Kathmandu, and at Nagasaki and Kanazawa, Japan, respectively.

24. In the Director's continued consultations with Member States and academic researchers within and outside the region, it was recognized that the Centre should encourage regional and subregional dialogue for the enhancement of openness, transparency and confidence-building, and the promotion of disarmament and security through the organization of regional meetings, or conducting studies, where appropriate, with an agenda appropriately adjusted to focus on these issues.

25. The meetings organized by the Centre at Kathmandu have served to promote a regional dialogue which is now known as the "Kathmandu process". The continuation of this process as a means of identifying pressing disarmament and security issues and to seek a region-oriented solution has gained the strong support of Member States and academic groups within the region. Strong support has also been expressed for the idea of creating a close network, linking the Centre and its interlocutors within the region, as a way of exchanging data and information related to disarmament and security.

26. A regional meeting, the seventh in the series, on "Openness, assurance of security and disarmament" was held at Kathmandu from 13 to 15 February 1995. A total of 41 participants from Governments, research institutes, the mass media and non-governmental organizations attended. The meeting considered the issues of openness and regional approaches to disarmament, the future course of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional forum, risk reduction and maritime confidence-building measures and the merits and problems regarding existing regional disarmament proposals. As the meeting was held in 1995 on the eve of the Review and Extension Conference, it also addressed nuclear-related issues such as security assurances and regional stability, regional approaches to increase transparency in nuclear matters and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Major presentations made at the meeting were published by the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in its Disarmament Periodic Review (vol. XVIII, No. 3, 1995).

27. In cooperation with the Prefecture and city of Nagasaki, as well as the Government of Japan, the Centre organized a conference on "Disarmament in the past half century and its future prospects", which was held at Nagasaki, Japan, from 12 to 16 June 1995. A total of 91 participants and 23 observers from Governments, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and the media within and outside the region attended the conference.

28. Against the background of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the end of the Second World War and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the conference reviewed the progress made by the international community in the field of arms control and disarmament in the past 50 years and searched for common approaches to new priorities for the future.

29. The conference addressed a variety of issues, including: the outcome of the Review and Extension Conference in 1995; further reduction of nuclear weapons; a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty; control and protection of nuclear materials; openness and transparency in military matters; strengthening of existing disarmament agreements; the transfer of conventional weapons; and the strengthening and wider application of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The papers presented at the conference were later published by the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in its Topical Paper Series, No. 21.

30. In close cooperation with the Prefecture of Ishikawa and the city of Kanazawa, the Centre organized a symposium on north-east Asia entitled "Multi-faceted cooperation in north-east Asia", which was held at Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, on 22 and 23 June 1995. A total of 20 participants, mostly from research institutes and non-governmental organizations within the north-east Asian region attended the symposium.

31. The symposium, non-governmental in nature, was intended to initiate in an informal manner a dialogue in various areas within the region, with the hope that it would be helpful in creating a favourable atmosphere and trust which are the essential ingredients for cooperative action. In keeping with this objective, the symposium dealt with the following agenda items: the possible role of the United Nations in the promotion of regional dialogue; prospects for north-east Asian cooperation; transparency, openness in military matters as a confidence-building measure; expansion of economic cooperation and its contribution to the strengthening of regional security; and current cooperation in the region of the Sea of Japan.

32. The participants reiterated the importance of the Kathmandu process and in this connection endorsed the idea that the Kanazawa symposium should be considered as an integral part of it. They also urged the Centre to continue to organize similar symposia with a view to establishing a habit of dialogue in the region. The importance of the involvement of the eight parties in this region was also stressed, namely Canada, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

33. The Director of the Centre also attended the four-nation Shanghai initiative meeting (China, India, Pakistan and the United States), held at Goa, India, from 15 to 18 January 1995, at the invitation of the Centre for Policy Research, an academic institute based at New Delhi. The meeting held wide-ranging discussions on the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons systems.